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OHIO MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO CONSPIRACY TO BOMB TARGETS IN EUROPE AND THE UNITED STATES

COLUMBUS – Christopher Paul, a/k/a “Abdul Malek,” a/ka “Paul Kenyatta Laws,” a 44-year-old U.S. citizen born in Columbus, Ohio, has pleaded guilty today to conspiring with others to use a weapon of mass destruction, namely explosive devices, against targets in Europe and the United States in violation of 18 USC, Section 2332a.

The guilty plea, which was entered today in the Southern District of Ohio, was announced by Patrick Rowan, Acting Assistant Attorney General for National Security; Gregory G. Lockhart, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio; and Keith L. Bennett, Special Agent-in-Charge, FBI Cincinnati Division.

On April 11, 2007, Paul was arrested in Ohio pursuant to a three-count indictment alleging that he conspired to provide material support and resources to terrorists; conspired to use a weapon of mass destruction; and provided material support and resources to terrorists. In pleading guilty to count two of the indictment, Paul has agreed to a sentence of 20 years in prison. The government has agreed to dismiss counts one and three of the indictment. A sentencing hearing will be scheduled following the completion of a pre-sentence investigation report.

“Today’s guilty plea brings an end to the long, dangerous career of Christopher Paul, an Ohio native who joined al Qaeda in the early 1990s, fought in Afghanistan and Bosnia and conspired with others to target Americans both at home and abroad,” said Acting Assistant Attorney General Rowan. “His conviction demonstrates our continuing resolve to protect the American public against terrorism.”

“This guilty plea is a significant step forward in the war on terror,” U.S. Attorney Gregory G. Lockhart said. “The hard work by the Columbus FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force has resulted in three significant terrorism convictions, showing that all parts of the country must be involved in our national efforts.”

Cincinnati FBI Special Agent-in-Charge Keith L. Bennett stated, “The conviction of Christopher Paul was the result of a five-year world-wide cooperative investigation by

the ten federal, state and local agencies which comprise the Columbus FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF). These agencies have demonstrated their resolve to leverage their resources to protect society from the scourge of international terrorism. No one agency can accomplish this immense task, but together, with the cooperation of the public, we can stop those who support terrorism from bringing it to our communities.”

By pleading guilty to count two of the indictment, Paul admitted that from at least April 1999 through January 2000, he agreed with at least one other person to become a member of a conspiracy which intended to use a weapon of mass destruction, namely explosive devices, against one or more of the following: U.S. nationals outside the United States; persons or property within the United States affecting interstate or foreign commerce; and/or property that was owned, leased, or used by the United States.

According to a statement of facts read by the case agent during the change of plea hearing and acknowledged to be true by the defendant:

In the early 1990s, Paul traveled to Pakistan and Afghanistan to join the mujahedeen. At an al Qaeda training camp in Afghanistan, he received initial training in, among other things, the use of assault rifles, rocket-propelled grenades, and small unit tactics. After successfully completing this training, he joined al Qaeda and stayed at the *Beit ur Salam* guesthouse, which was exclusively for al Qaeda members. Having distinguished himself to al Qaeda, Paul was then selected for and obtained advanced training in explosives, climbing, and military history. Paul then fought in Afghanistan alongside other mujahedeen.

After fighting in Afghanistan, Paul returned to Ohio, where he began instructing individuals in martial arts in Columbus. He also began recruiting local individuals with extremist intentions in order to establish a jihadist group in Ohio. Over time and through his association with al Qaeda, Paul became dedicated to committing jihad and furthering the objectives of al Qaeda and other radical Islamic fundamentalists.

From 1993 through 1995, Paul, using various passports and names, traveled to the Balkans in Europe and fought in conflict zones such as Bosnia, establishing further contact with radical Islamic fundamentalists, and creating a master list of al Qaeda leaders and other Islamic radicals worldwide. This list and bomb-making information was seized during the execution of a search warrant at the defendant’s home.

Paul returned to Columbus after fighting in the Balkans, and, in 1997, received a fax from two al Qaeda co-conspirators in Europe asking, on behalf of “the brothers,” for Paul to find them a “true group and place to make jihad.” While in Columbus, Paul conducted training operations in Burr Oak State Park in Ohio with several members of his local group, replicating terrorist training he had received in Afghanistan and Bosnia.

Preparing to travel again overseas, Paul obtained a new passport after claiming his old passport -- in one of his other aliases -- had been damaged by water. Beginning in

March 31, 1999 and continuing through Jan. 31, 2000, Paul made 44 calls to an Islamic fundamentalist co-conspirator in Europe, who was arrested in 2003 and later convicted of a terrorist conspiracy.

On April 16, 1999, Paul traveled to meet with members of an Islamic terror cell in Germany, who knew him as an expert in bomb-making/detonation devices. In Germany, Paul provided explosives training to the cell knowing that it was planning to use this training to construct bombs, car bombs, and similar devices to be used against Americans while they vacationed at foreign tourist resorts. The German terrorist cell also planned to use bombs against Americans in the United States, and against U.S. facilities abroad, such as U.S. embassies, diplomatic premises and military bases in Europe.

Upon his return to Ohio from Germany, Paul had a member of his group in Columbus purchase a printer / scanner in May 1999. The printer / scanner was then sent to one of the German terror cell members in order to help the cell manufacture fraudulent documents to facilitate worldwide travel. The cell member did not claim the package in Germany and it was sent back to Paul. During this time, Paul also bought other equipment to be used by extremists, including night vision equipment and a laser range finder. Additional similar items were found during the execution of search warrants by the Columbus FBI JTTF. Furthermore, in November 1999, bank records show that Paul wire transferred \$1,760 to one of the principal members of the German cell.

The Paul investigation was conducted by the Columbus FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force, a multi-agency operation led by the FBI that includes agents and officers from ten federal, state and local law enforcement agencies. Participating agencies include:

U.S. Marshals Service
Immigration and Customs Enforcement
Ohio State Highway Patrol
Franklin County Sheriff's Office
Worthington Police Department
Defense Criminal Investigative Service
Ohio Investigative Unit (Ohio DPS)

Internal Revenue Service
Columbus Fire Department
Ohio National Guard
Columbus Police Department
Upper Arlington Police Department
Westerville Police Department

The case was prosecuted by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Ohio and the Justice Department's National Security Division.

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